WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 NOV.-DEC. 1992

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

WCHS TO HEAR ABOUT THANKSGIVING'S DUTCH CONNECTION NOVEMBER 15

"Thanksgiving: The Dutch Connection" will be Don and Ali Riddering's topic at the WCHS meeting at 2 p.m. Sunday, November 15, in the Multipurpose Room of the Ann Arbor Public Library.

Don, a retired teacher and president of the Salem Historical Society, and his wife, Ali, will illustrate Dutch influence on American culture and history with slides of their recent trip to the Netherlands.

WCHS DECEMBER MEETING AT CLEMENTS LIBRARY; BRING PICTURES TO COPY

WCHS will meet for holiday cheer at 2 p.m. Sunday, December l3, at the U-M's Clements Library, 909 South University.

Besides enjoying treats and a display of antique toys, readers may give the Society a gift that costs them nothing. Please bring *unframed* old family or school photographs to be copied for the Society's archives.

Sam Breck will make negatives on the spot so you don't have to worry about loss. Be prepared to *describe, identify and date them.*

If you can contribute Christmas cookies please call 662-9092.

VCR DRIVE AT 95%, KEEP COLLECTING PLEASE

WCHS has collected 95 percent of the 16,509 Bill Knapp's Restaurant points needed to earn a new video cassette recorder and has received an extension of our deadline to collect the rest.

Anyone who eats at any Knapp's Restaurant can get a yellow points slip from the cashier each time with one point for each dollar spent.

Please keep collecting points and give or send to:Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Questions? Call 663-8826.

WCHS MUSEUM HOUSE, RESCUED FROM DEMOLITION NOW BEING RESTORED TO SHOW WASHTENAW HISTORY

A Greek Revival home that stood on Ann Arbor's Wall Street in Lower Town for more than 150 years is now being restored as a museum of county history by the Washtenaw County Historical Society. It was saved from demolition for a parking lot through the cooperation of the University of Michigan and City of Ann Arbor.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

TO GIVE WASHTENAW'S PAST A FUTURE, PLEASE JOIN, WCHS, SUPPORT FUND DRIVE TO FINISH MUSEUM

This issue of the *Washtenaw Impressions* has a two-fold purpose—it is the last issue of 1992 covering November and December plus January, 1993, and includes both the membership renewal letter and is the beginning of Phase II of our fund drive to raise enough money to finish the interior of the Museum so it may be opened for "business."

I believe that the *Impressions* is our very best "ambassador" to the people of our area to let everyone know what a "gem" our Museum will be. By combining our yearly membership letter and return envelope with this *Impressions* were are able to reach more people and also reduce our mailing costs.

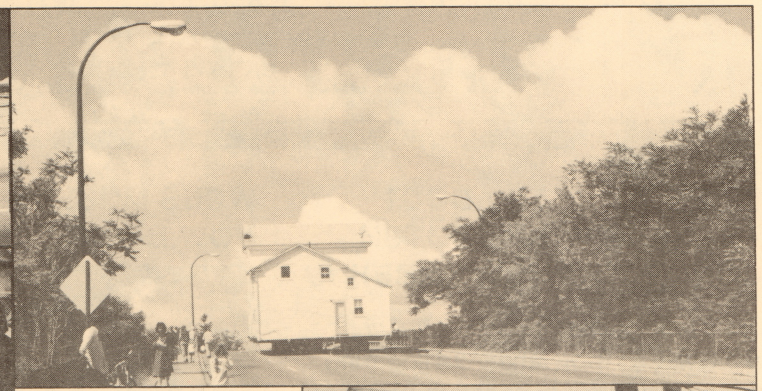
The Washtenaw County Historical Society has received a very welcome early donation from Patricia Pooley, president of The Moveable Feast, who has offered to contribute gift certificates for complimentary entrees or desserts to donors of specified amounts.

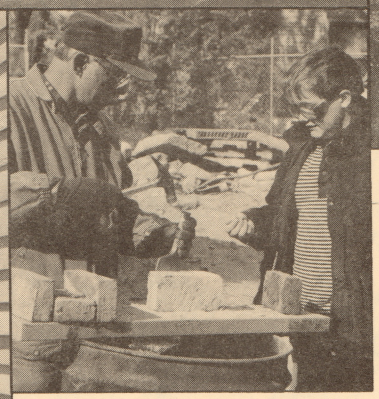
Donors of $100 will receive a gift certificate for desserts for two at either lunch or dinner; those donating $500 will receive a gift certificate for two luncheon entrees; and $1,000 donors will enjoy dinner entrees for two with their gift certificate. This offer is good from November, 1992 through March, 1993—excluding December, 1992.

The Washtenaw County Historical Society is most grateful to Pat Pooley for her continued support of our endeavors as in the past The Moveable

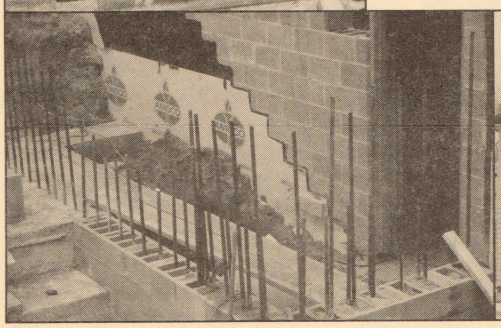
(continued on page 4)

HOUSE MOVED TO NORTH MAIN, RESTORATION PROCEEDING





An abandoned gas station at Beakes and North Main Streets (top left) was cleared away by the City of Ann Arbor to make way for the WCHS Museum on Main Street. The house rode on steel beams (far left) to its new site. Boy Scout Troop 4 (left) cleaned old hand-made bricks from the old foundation for re-use in the new. The house is on its way (top right) over Broadway Bridge and in place at 500 North Main (right).



Deep basement for storage. Exterior now faced with old bricks.

Roof sag repaired, new cedar shake roof installed.

Lanscaping started with flowering crab apple tree.

Front hall. Structural evidence suggests the house was built in four stages, at least three parts in the 1830s and most of the back part was built before the front. A final addition to the north may have been made as late as 1853.

President Pauline Walters inspecting amity button in newel post at 1991 open house. Visitors had an opportunity to see the house "in the rough." The Society is now seeking funds to do the interior restoration and open the museum.

Bets Hansen presides over moveable museum at Kerrytown, one of several fund-raising activities. The Society is most grateful to all who have contributed to bring the project thus far.

Russell Bidlack, retired U-M dean and past-president of WCHS, holds one of the treasures to be exhibited, Ann Allen's Bible. Her husband, John, founded Ann Arbor in 1824.

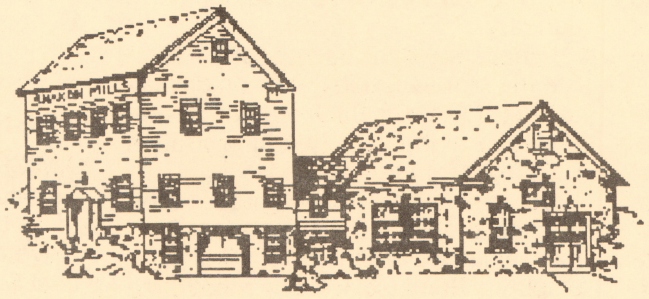
OLD FORD MILL A WINERY, HENRY WOULD NEVER APPROVE

An old grist mill on a back road in Washtenaw County hardly seems like a place you'd find a champagne cellar.

But that is exactly what WCHS visitors found October 18 at Sharon Mills Winery in the hamlet of Sharon Hollow, northwest of Manchester.

The winery is located in the Greek Revival style mill first built in 1834-35 on the Raisin River where it runs between hills forming the "hollow."

Henry Ford bought the property in the late 1920s, rebuilt and restored it. He operated it as a small factory from 1939-1951. Later it became a private residence for 30 years and is now known as the Sharon Mills Winery.



Jean and Michael Hawker of the family who operate the winery told the history of the mill and some of the how-to of making champagne.

Ford added the room in which the group was seated, she said. It is faced with fieldstone on the outside and with brick on the inside. Today, wedding receptions can be catered there.

Upstairs on a balcony at the north end of the wine-tasting room is a hydro-electric generator which runs off the river. Ford put it in in 1933 and it is still operational today, she said. "We maintain it to provide all our electricity for the building including electric heat."

It has the original (shiny black) soybean enamel paint like Ford used on his automobiles in the 1930s. It has been operated pretty much maintenance free since 1933 except for occasional grease and oil.

"During the '30s and '40s, Ford manufactured cigar lighters for automobiles here, among other things. While we refer to them as cigarette lighters, Ford was against cigarettes so he dubbed them 'cigar lighters.'

"The lighter handle was made of a sort of plastic with a soybean oil derivative. Ford had local farmers growing soybeans for him during the summer and working for him at the mill in the winter.

"At peak capacity, Ford employed 90 people in three shifts around the clock with about 30 on each shift.

"Ford sold the mill in 195l. It was vacant, I believe, from 1959-61 when my husband, Mike,and his mother came out from Dearborn and she purchased it for a private residence.

"The tasting room was then a combination of living room, dining room and bedroom for the boys. His mother now lives on the floor above the tasting room.

"My mother-in-law ran an antique shop in the downstairs area for a number of years, the last few years in partnership with former Governor John Swainson who is from Manchester.

"The building is now a designated a Michigan historic site.

"In 1989 we as a family—Michael and myself, and his brother Craig and his wife who live in Brighton—decided to open up a winery."

Her husband , Michael, then led the group into the champagne cellar.

The cellar is part of the original structure," he said. "When Ford redid the building he increased the depth of this room and redid the foundation with field stone. We are actually below the level of the river in this room."

"That wheel you see spinning is a fly wheel for the generator upstairs—same as the flywheel on your car, just bigger. The water drops about nine feet and spins the turbine below, then shoots out the back and meets the river again.

"It was our dream to do sparkling wine, using fruit and grapes from the Old Mission Peninsula up by Traverse City. That is on the same latitude as the champagne region in France.

"Because of the climate and soil up there, we get a very high acidity in the soil which is very good for sparkling wine or champagne.

We started with the champagne process about six years ago and we opened this winery in the fall of 1989. We buy fruit from four different growers on the Old Mission Peninsula and we utilize Chateau Grand Traverse facilities up there to do the first fermentation.

"The way you make champagne, you take wine, put it in a champagne bottle, add yeast and sugar which causes a second fermentation to take place in the bottle.

"That second fermentation is what produces champagne. The bubbles that you see are actually carbon dioxide which is a by-product of that second fermentation."

The room was nearly full of aging champagne in bottles laying horizontally on racks. He held up a bottle to the light to show the sediment from the second fermentation.

"As it ages, the sediment interacts with the wine, enhances it, clarifies it and brings out the flavor. We'll taste periodically when we feel they are ready for market, usually after 2-6 years."

To get rid of the sediment the bottles go into riddling racks—theirs are 100 year old French racks. There the bottles must be turned every day for a month to six weeks until the bottle is upside down and the sediment all collected in the neck under the cap.

Then they get the bottles very cold and freeze an inch or so of the neck. The trick is to pop off the top, disgorge the sediment and quickly recap it. If we do a good job , we'll only lose from 2-6 percent of the product. If we do a bad job, we may lose half the bottle.

The bottles are under quite a bit of pressure after the second fermentation—about 100-120 pounds per square inch. After it gets a cork, a label and a wire hood, it is ready to sell.

"What I described to you is the French method of champagne making—that's how it was done 200 years ago. We still do everything by hand. In France and in the big houses they now have machines to do everything.

"We've had a lot of trial and error. We've managed some successes. We won several medals this year and last—one for our Riesling and one for our '83 Chardonnay from the American Wine Society and others from the Michigan State Fair and from New York."

"Ford completely tore down the building and put it back together, using as much original beams and timbers as he could. He went as far as Virginia to match up wood.

"He moved the building back ten feet from the road. It was real close to the road because it was convenient for wagons to drive up to the mill.

"Ford dug out and widened the pond, put in a dam and diverted the water underneath the road to the mill.

"He used local stone on the foundation and on the river banks but he sent to Germany for the stone masons to do the work.

"It cost Ford $400,000 to redo this building and add a generator in the late '20s and early '30s.

When Ford operated it as a small factory, they made cigar lighters for automobiles and parts for car generators, airplane engines, stop light switches and even for brakes for tanks in World War II.

But wine and champagne—Ford would never approve.

KAREN'S COLUMN

WCC TO PRINT PRE-1913 GLASS NEGATIVES; MONEY TOOL, COOKBOOK DISPLAYS PREVIEW MUSEUM TO BE

You may recall the box of large glass slides that Bob Lyons donated to the Society at last April's fund raising event at Bob's County Store. Bob, with Karl Lagler's assistance, acquired a box of 94 slides from the Rentschler Studio in Ann Arbor.

Each fragile slide, when held to the light, shows a portrait of a local resident, photographed prior to 1913. Most are identified by name, scratched into the emulsion on the plate.

Terry Abrams, from Washtenaw Community College's photography department, will have his students make contact prints of each of these slides.

The set of prints will make the details of these portraits readily available in an easy-to-handle form. We thank Mr. Abrams and his students for their help with this project.

Jan Longone, Trudy Bulkley and Susan Wineberg are putting together a small exhibit of Washtenaw County cookbooks. It will be going into our display case at the County Administration Building (the old Post Office) sometime in January.

Other small exhibits that can be seen are the Money Exhibit, now on display at First of America Bank on Main Street, and tools at the County Administration Building, Main at Catherine.

Because we actively engage in fund raising, money as a theme came to mind when we organized our first mini-display. Because we are renovating an old house, old tools seemed natural for our second display. Washtenaw County cookbooks will help to make the point that we hope MoMS will be "cooking" soon!

Karen O'Neal
665-2242

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *(continued)*

Feast has provided refreshments to our Gala last April, the cookies and cider at our October, 1991, Open House, and cookies at our Christmas 1990 meeting at the Clements Library.

I hope a lot of our readers will take advantage of this delicious treat, or if that is not possible, at least join us in supporting our efforts to complete the Museum so that we may display our artifacts from Washtenaw County's past.

Pauline Walters
662-9092

NEW HISTORIC BUILDINGS BOOK COMING DECEMBER 1

A new expanded edition of *Historic Buildings, Ann Arbor, Michigan* is expected off the press December 1.

The 96-page 1977 edition featured 73 buildings. The new 260-page second edition describes 182. Susan Wineberg researched the additional sites and Marjorie Reade updated her earlier articles.

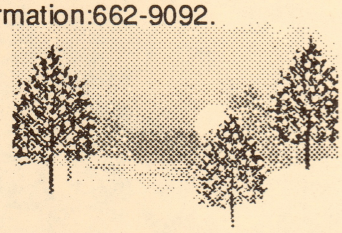
It will be in local bookstores and available by mail from Kempf House, 312 South Division, for $14.95 plus $2.50 shipping. Information: 996-3008.

OWS ARTS, CRAFTS TOUR

Visitors can see and buy artists' work displayed in their own homes and studios on the Old West Side Arts and Crafts Tour 12-4 p.m. Sunday, December 6. Information: Christine Lux, 761-2691 or see *Ann Arbor Observer* December calendar.

CAST $ VOTE FOR WCHS TREE AT ENGLANDER'S

WCHS will trim a tree at Englander's Furniture Store and readers are invited to visit the store between Wednesday, November 25 and December 29 to cast $ votes for our tree—one dollar—one vote. All WCHS votes go to WCHS. Information:662-9092.



PAULINE, KAREN, SUSAN DO OCTOBER *IMPRESSIONS*

Many thanks to Pauline Walters, Karen O'Neal and Susan Wineberg for their help in producing the October 1992 *Impressions* while the editor was out of town.

Susan did the article on the John Maynard house on North Division Street, recently known as Canterbury House. Pauline and Karen handled the rest.

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Published September-May, except December.
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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"THE DUTCH CONNECTION"
2:00 P.M. Sunday
November 15, 1992

Ann Arbor Public Library
343 S. Fifth Avenue

CHRISTMAS MEETING
December 13, 1992
(See Page 1 for Details)

NO JANUARY MEETING!

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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